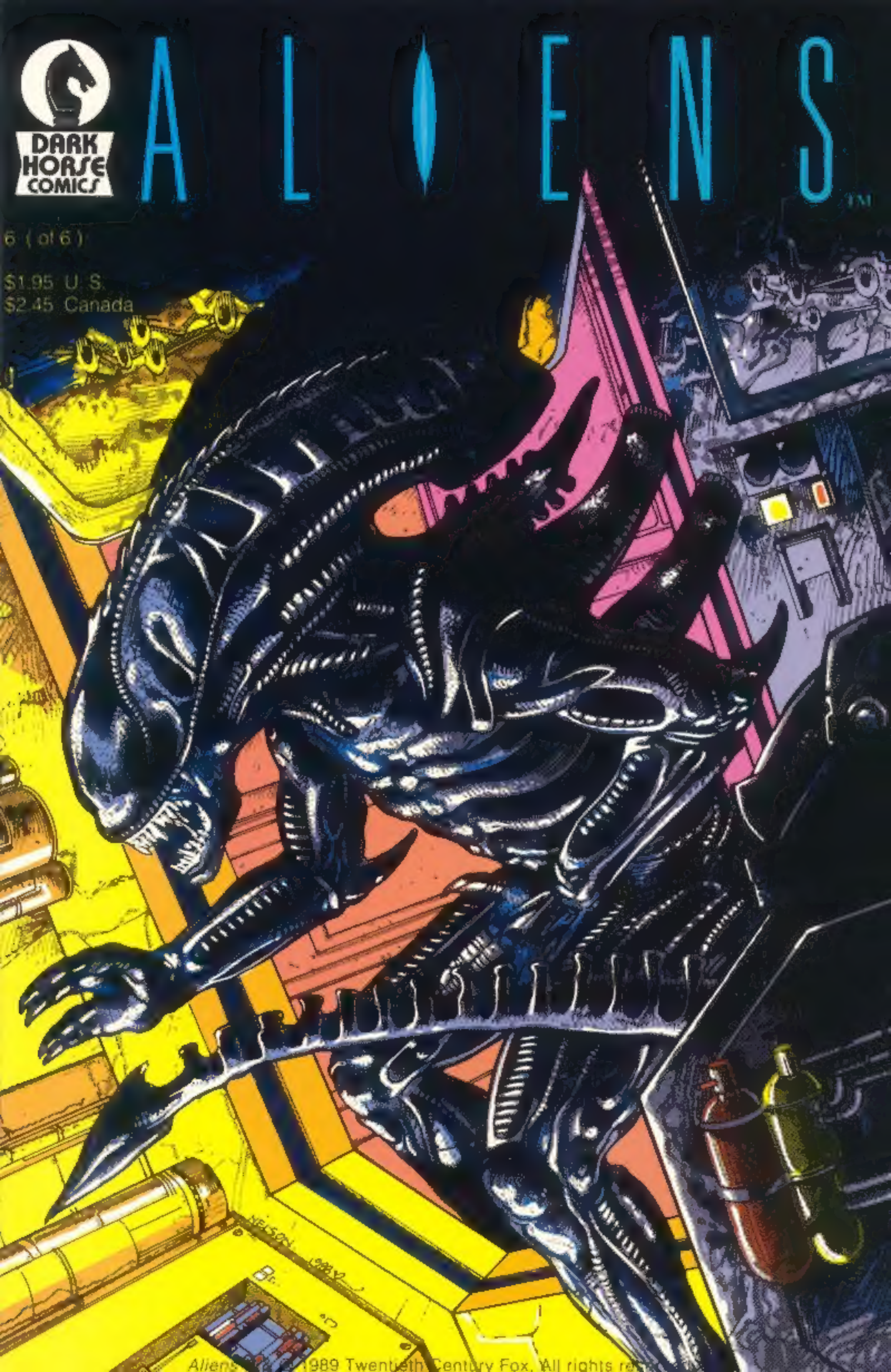
DARK HORSE COMICS
ALIENS™
6 (of 6)
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ALIENS™

Based on characters and situations from the Twentieth Century Fox motion picture.

No. 6 (of 6) July, 1989

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IT HAD DEAD EYES, SEEING AND NOT SEEING.
IT HAD DESTROYED THE ALIENS, BUT NOT FOR US. NEVER FOR US.
WHY?
IT DIDN'T SPEAK, BUT SOMETHING EXPLODED INSIDE MY HEAD, BRIGHT LIKE A MILLION SUNS--
THE IMAGES BOILED UP FROM SOME DEEPER PLACE, THE SAME PLANE AS PRIMAL INSTINCT-- HUNGER, PAIN, FEAR--
--HATRED.
NEWT--!
I- CAN-- SEE--

MY NAME IS REBECCA, BUT EVERYONE CALLS ME NEWT. I'M SIX YEARS OLD. I LIVE ON A WORLD CALLED ACHERON.
THERE ARE 159 OF US ON THE PLANET. THE CORPORATION CALLS US TERRAFORMERS. MY FATHER CALLS US PIONEERS.
THE CORPORATION HAD SENT US OUT TO INVESTIGATE SOME SORT OF MAGNETIC SURGE. I CAN STILL REMEMBER MY FATHER'S SMILE-- THE SCENT OF MY MOTHER'S PERFUME--
THE READINGS ARE GOING OFF SCALE-- WE MUST HAVE FOUND THE MOTHER LODE-!
--AND YOU KNOW THE RULES-- WE FIND IT, WE KEEP IT.
--MY GOD.
HARD TO BELIEVE SOMETHING THIS BIG--WITH THIS KIND OF RESONANCE-- WENT WITHOUT BEING NOTICED--
IT'S PARTLY SHELTERED BY NATURAL ROCK FORMATIONS--AND THE DAMNED EC-SATS NEVER WORKED UP TO SPEC--
WHAT'S IT MATTER? IT'S OURS NOW.

MY NAME'S NEWT--I--I'M NOT SIX YEARS OLD--JESUS, IT WAS ALL SO LONG AGO. I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER. DON'T MAKE ME REMEMBER.

WIND'S REALLY KICKING UP--WE'LL MAKE A QUICK LOOP TO SECURE THE CLAIM, THEN HEAD BACK--

YOU KIDS STAY INSIDE I MEAN IT--NO FOOLING AROUND.

YOU CAN WATCH OVER THE MONITOR, BUT DON'T TOUCH.

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE IT HAPPEN AGAIN.

--MY GOD, RUSS--IT'S ENORMOUS--

OVER HERE--LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF GASH IN THE HULL--

I WAS ONLY SIX YEARS OLD. THE DISCOVERY OF THE DERELICT DIDN'T REALLY MEAN ANYTHING TO ME.

--THIS IS INCREDIBLE--EVERYTHING'S SMOOTH, ALMOST ORGANIC--

WE HAD TERRAFORMED A BARREN ROCK INTO A VIABLE, LIFE-SUSTAINING PLANET.

WE HAD BATTLED TIME, SPACE, THE ELEMENTS--AND WON. WE WEREN'T AFRAID.

--ANNE--
--IN HERE--!

THAT CAME LATER.

MAYBE THAT THING IN THE DERELICT SHARED OUR BLIND ARROGANCE--

--UNTIL THE ALIENS KILLED IT.

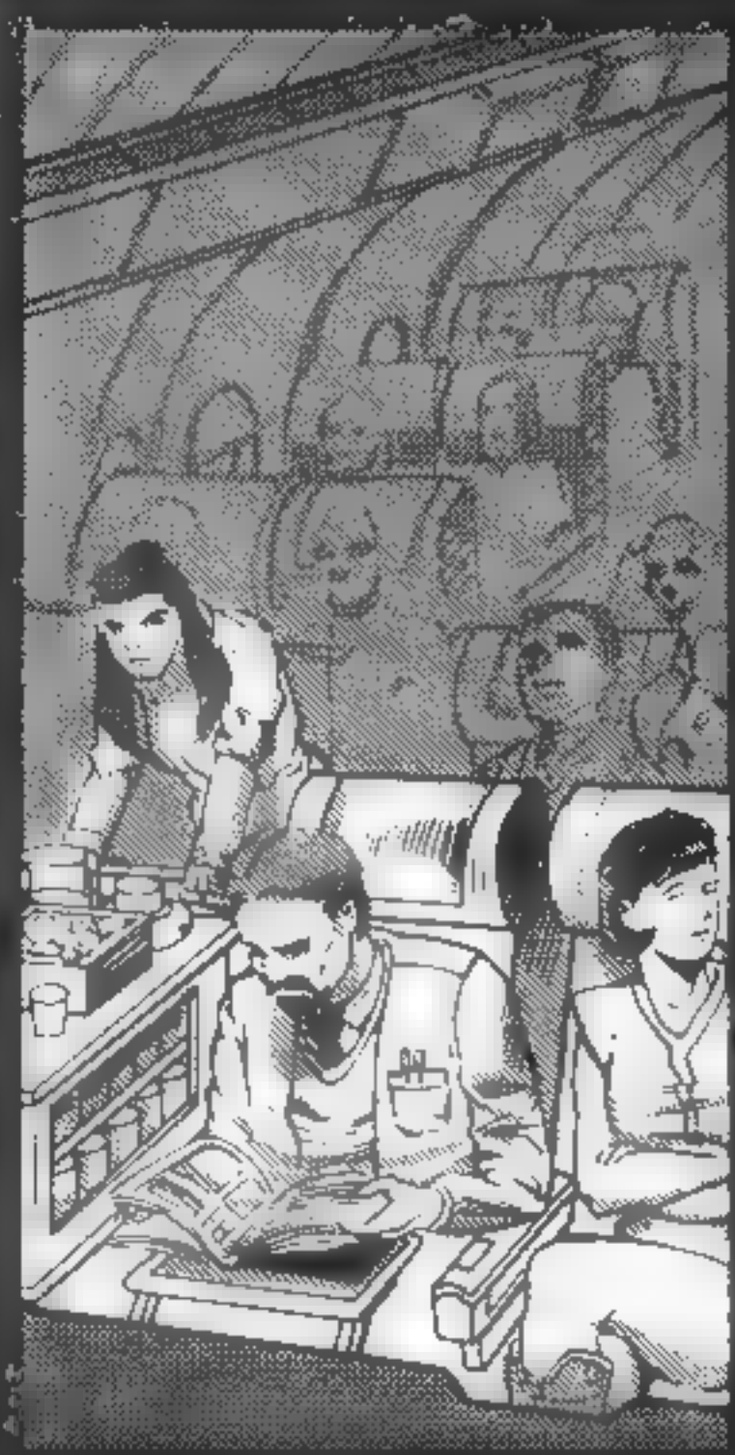
IT SOMEHOW KNEW THAT I HAD SEEN THE WRECKAGE. WE SHARED A GROTESQUE FORM OF EMPATHY--
NEWT--WHAT'S IT DOING TO YOU?
«UKKK»-- IT-WANTS ME TO KNOW--
I COULD ONLY PICK OUT BITS AND PIECES--LIKE SOMEONE BLINKING CHANNELS ON A VIDEO.
IT DESCRIBED A SHIP--SOME KIND OF MISSION--
THE EGGS--OH GOD-- THE EGGS--
DON'T--MAKE ME-- SEE IT--AGAIN--
MY NAME-- IS NEWT-- I'M SIX YEARS OLD--
--MY FATHER KNELT--IN FRONT OF THE PODS. I COULD SEE HIM OVER THE TRACTOR'S MONITOR-- I COULD SEE THE EXCITEMENT IN HIS EYES--
JESUS, ANNE, I SAW SOMETHING MOVING-- I THINK THEY'RE STILL ALI--

DADDY-- NO!
DADDY--NO!
THE PILOT ABOARD THE CARGO VESSEL LOST CONTROL OF IT'S SHIP--
IT SHOULD HAVE DRIFTED FOREVER--IT SHOULD HAVE CARRIED THE ALIEN THINGS INTO THE HELL OF DEEP SPACE.
INSTEAD IT CRASHED INTO THE WORLD THAT MAN WOULD CHRISTEN ACHERON-- AND THE SPORE SURVIVED.
THEY WAITED PATIENTLY FOR NEW BLOOD. THEY FOUND IT IN THE COLONISTS--MY PARENTS--
YOUR-- FRIEND--?

I COULD HEAR A HIGH PITCHED WHINE IN MY EARS, LIKE SOME DISTANT, HORRIBLE SCREAM.
THIS ANTENNA'S SHOT. WE'LL HAVE TO BYPASS IT AND RUN THE DIRECTIONALS THROUGH THE AFT SYSTEM.
MY MIND WAS SLIPPING AWAY.
WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG, YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND EVIL. IT'S AN INTANGIBLE THING--LIKE THE AIR OR THE SKY--
--AND JUST AS PERVASIVE.
I WANTED TO BELIEVE THERE WAS SOMETHING BETTER--THAT THERE WAS SOME KIND OF HOPE.
IT WATCHED US WITH IT'S DEAD EYES AND I FELT A CHILL. IT HAD COME TO THE ALIEN HOME-WORLD OUT OF HATE. IT HAD RESCUED US IN THE NAME OF REVENGE.
PERHAPS EVIL IS THE ONLY UNIVERSAL TRUTH.

EYES ONLY DOUBLE A-ALPHA LOG ON, ORONA.
I-I'VE LOST TRACK OF TIME SINCE THE BIONATIONAL ATTACK I'VE BARRICADED MYSELF IN MY OFFICE TO GIVE ME TIME TO PREPARE THIS FINAL REPORT.
EVIDENTLY THE ALIEN QUEEN IS ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN SOME SUBCONSCIOUS FASHION. WITH OTHER SPECIES. IN HUMAN BEINGS, THESE DISSEMINATIONS MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN THE FORM OF PATTERN NIGHTMARES.
THE DREAMS WERE A LURE.
AT FIRST WE THOUGHT WE'D BE ABLE TO CONTAIN THE SPORE. INFESTATION SEEMED LIMITED TO A NARROW GEOGRAPHIC RANGE.
BRAM! BRAM!
BRRRP!
AAGH--!
AND YET FOR EVERY CLUSTER WE FOUND, THERE WERE TEN MORE JUST LIKE IT.
NAME'S OSTROW. LOOKS LIKE HE WAS SOME SORT OF BIG SHOT WITH BIONATIONAL.
BURN THE SON OF A BITCH.

THE ALIEN'S SUBCONSCIOUS BAIT TRANSCENDED CLASS AND POLITICAL BOUNDARIES. WE FOUND HIVES EVERYWHERE.
COME ON, MOVE IT!
I WANT A PERIMETER AROUND THE HOUSE AND I WANT AIR SUPPORT, NOW--!
WITH EACH NEW DISCOVERY, OUR HOPE OF DESTROYING THE CREATURES BEFORE THEY ENTERED THE CIVILIAN POPULATION FADED.
POOM!
HOWEVER WE STILL CONSIDERED CONTAINMENT AN OPTION. IN STUDYING THE BIONATIONAL FILES WE LEARNED THEIR QUEEN HAD GESTATED A NUMBER OF WEEKS PRIOR TO MATURATION.
USING THEIR EXPERIMENT AS A BASELINE, I ASSUMED WE STILL HAD TIME BEFORE ANY NEW QUEENS WOULD BECOME VIABLE.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
I WAS WRONG.



PERHAPS OUR WORST MISTAKE WAS UNDERESTIMATING THE SHEER INSTINCTUAL *CUNNING* OF THE CREATURES. WE DIDN'T SEE THE UNDERLYING *PATTERN* BEHIND THEIR EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS--THE WAY EVERY FACET OF THEIR EXISTANCE WAS GEARED TOWARD *PROPAGATION*. THE QUEENS MATURED AT WHATEVER SPEED THEIR *SURVIVAL* DICTATED.

WE HAD ASSUMED THE GESTATION PERIOD WAS TIME FOR THE ALIEN EMBRYO TO FEED AND GROW, BUT IT WAS MORE THAN THAT IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE UNKNOWING *HOST* TO SPREAD IT'S *SPORE* TO OTHER SITES.

THERE WAS A GEOMETRIC *PERFECTION* TO THE INFESTATIONS.

EACH QUEEN WOULD LAY STILL *MORE* QUEENS, AND WITH EVERY GENERATION THE SPORE BECAME MORE ENTRENCHED. MORE--

WHUMP!

AHH. AT LAST.

THE CIVILIAN AUTHORITY WAS WEAK IN THE FACE OF THE DEVASTATION. WHEN THE GENERALS FINALLY STAGED THEIR COUP IT SEEMED ALMOST--*WELCOME*.

AGHH--YOU CAN'T DO THIS-- IT'S AGAINST THE--

SHUT UP!

3ZZ

THE MILITARY CREATED TESTING CENTERS WHERE PHYSICIANS CHECKED CIVILIANS FOR SIGNS OF THE ALIEN INFECTION. AT FIRST THE TESTS WERE VOLUNTARY.

TESTING CENTER

WITHIN DAYS THAT *CHANGED*.

THERE WERE RUMORS THE MILITARY WAS USING THE PRETEXT OF ALIEN INFECTION TO *ELIMINATE* POLITICAL DISSIDENTS--THE POOR THE DISAFFECTED--

MARGARET MEGADEATH

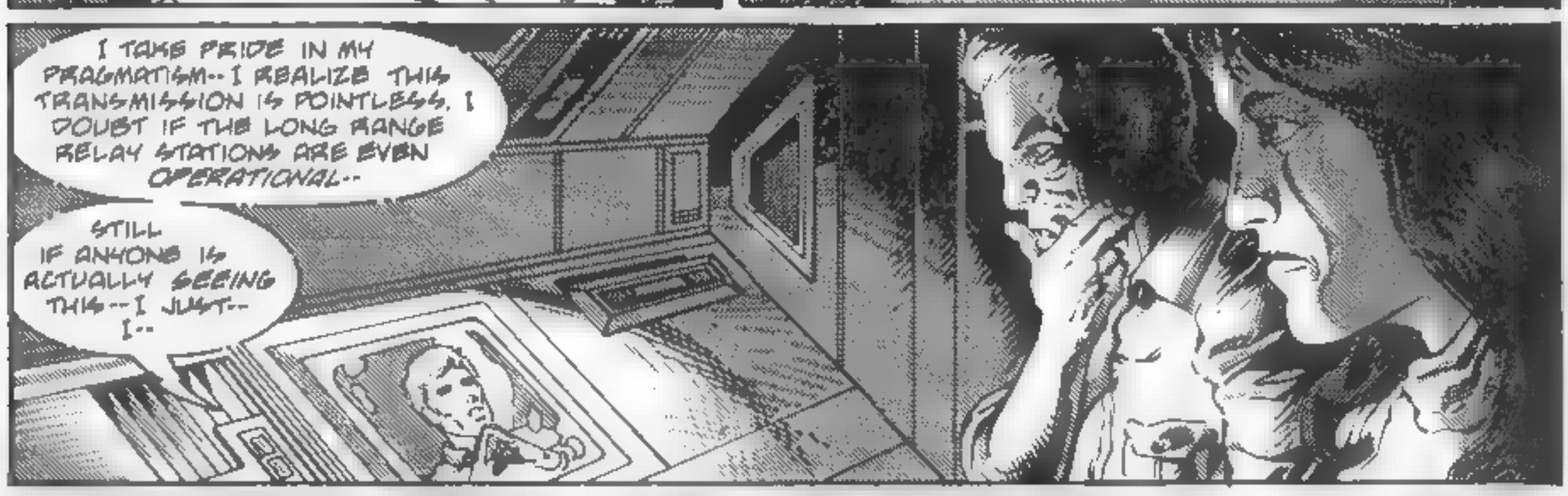
AS IF SUCH PETTY RIVALRIES EVEN *MATTERED*.

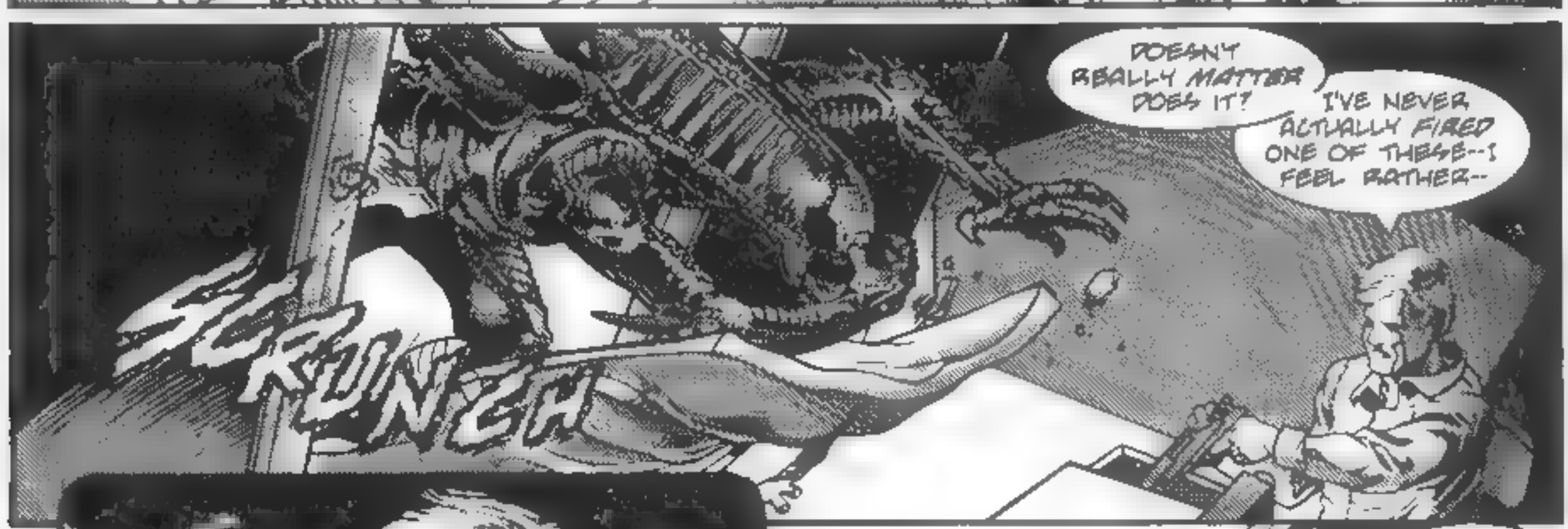
VITAL SERVICES-- WATER, ELECTRICITY-- BEGAN TO FAIL.
WE'VE HEARD OF INFESTATIONS IN EUROPE, AUSTRALIA. THE SEED IS GROWING WITH REMARKABLE SPEED.
FROM ALL THIS, I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ABOUT HUMANITY.
MAN IS AN ANIMAL, DRIVEN BY ANIMAL PASSIONS. 'CIVILIZATION' IS A PATHETIC CHARADE OF MANNERS, PREDICATED ON A TISSUE-THIN VEIL OF LIES.
IN THE FUTURE-- IF THERE IS A FUTURE-- HISTORIANS MAY BLAME OUR FAILURES ON SOME EXTERNAL CAUSE--
--THE ALIENS. BIONATIONAL. FATE.
I KNOW THE TRUTH. THOSE THINGS DIDN'T DESTROY US.
WE DID.

WHAM!
THEY-- THEY'LL BE HERE SOON.
THE MILITARY HAS ORGANIZED OFF-WORLD SHIPS TO EVACUATE "VITAL PERSONNEL" TO THE OUTER COLONIES--MAINLY THEIR OWN PRECIOUS HIDES.
I'VE CHOSEN TO REMAIN BEHIND.
WE MADE THE MISTAKE OF PERCEIVING THE ALIENS AS SENTIENT WARRIORS. I FINALLY REALIZED THE TRUTH. THEY'RE DISEASE. A CANCER.
IT'LL BE JUST A MOMENT, COLONEL. THE SEALS HAVE TO BE BURNED BEFORE THE OUTER DOOR--
JUST DO IT.
KEEP OUT
MY--MY MOTHER DIED OF CANCER. ODD HOW I'VE BEEN THINKING OF HER--
YEARS AGO, FOLLOWING SURGERY, DOCTORS WOULD APPLY RADIATION TO THE AFFECTED AREA IN HOPE OF DESTROYING ALL TRACES OF THE SCOURGE.
I'M SHOWING GREEN ON 40% OF THE WARHEADS THE BURST SHOULD VAPORIZE THE MOUNTAIN-- PREVAILING WINDS WILL DO THE REST--
IT SOUNDS SO PRIMITIVE, BUT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE OLD WAYS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE.

I'VE TIMED THE DETONATION TO COINCIDE WITH THE MILITARY'S ESCAPE!

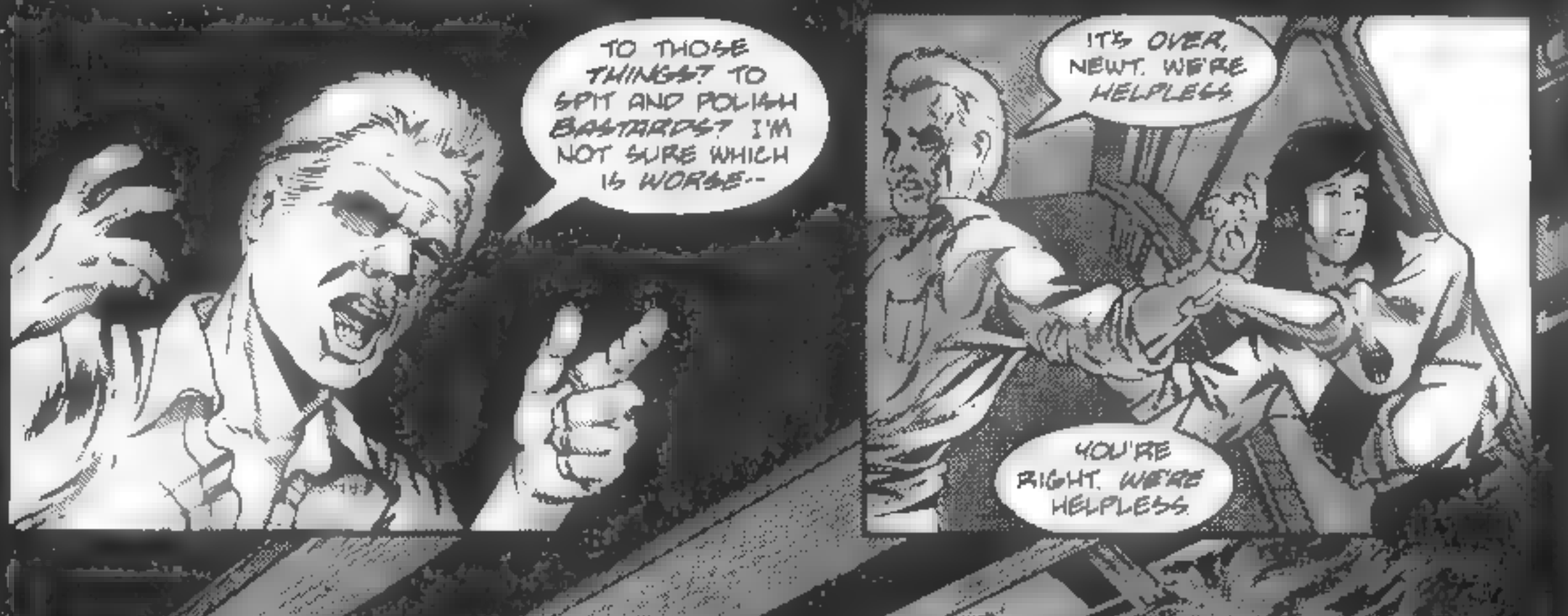
THEY THINK THEY CAN DESTROY THE CREATURES. THEY THINK SOMEDAY THEY'LL BE ABLE TO COME BACK TO THEIR WORLD.
THERE'S SOMETHING PATHETIC ABOUT THE STRUGGLE MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I WON'T SURVIVE TO SEE THEM PROVEN WRONG.


I TAKE PRIDE IN MY PRAGMATISM-- I REALIZE THIS TRANSMISSION IS POINTLESS. I DOUBT IF THE LONG RANGE RELAY STATIONS ARE EVEN OPERATIONAL--
STILL IF ANYONE IS ACTUALLY SEEING THIS-- I JUST-- I--


DOESN'T REALLY MATTER DOES IT?
I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY FIRED ONE OF THESE-- I FEEL RATHER--
SCRUNCH

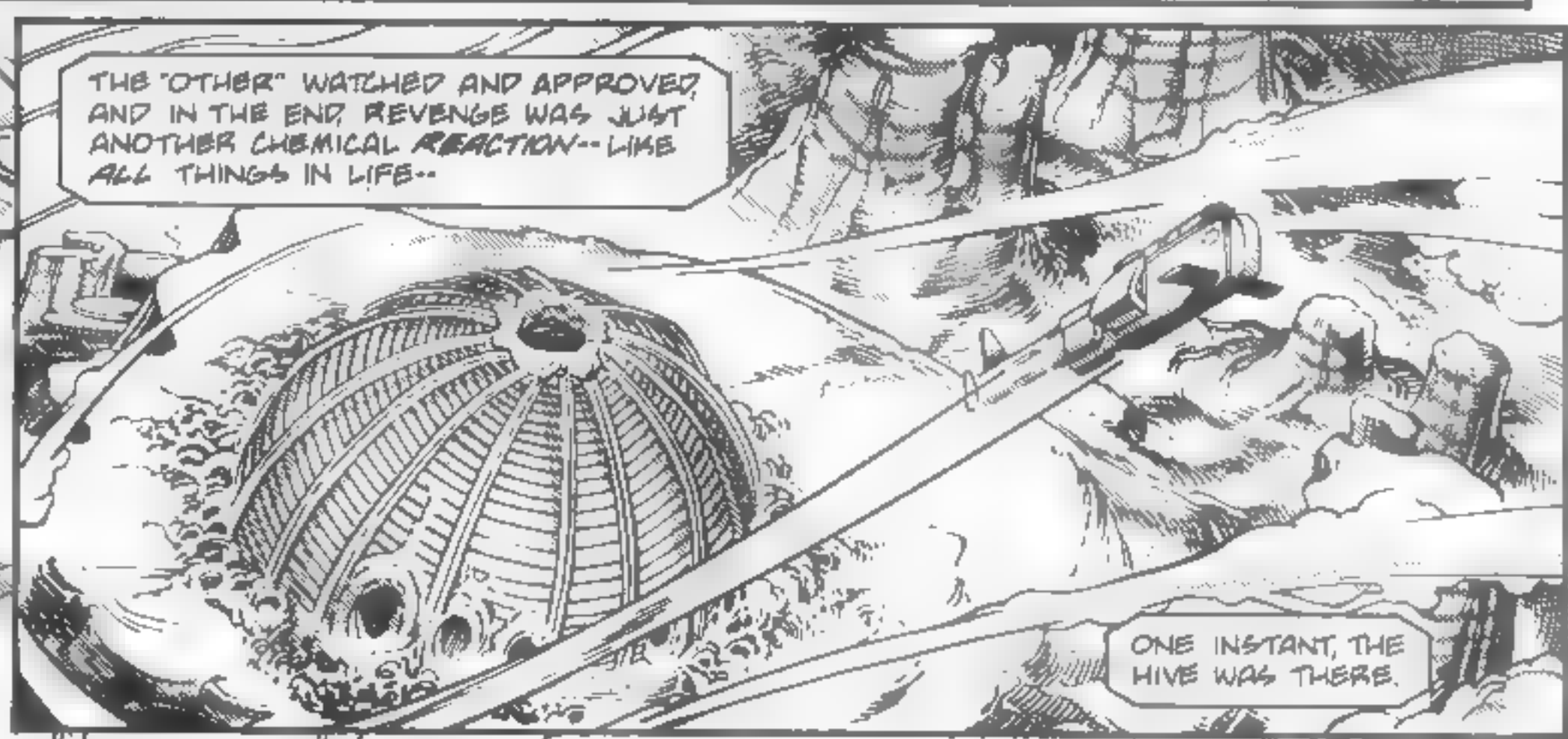
--FOOLISH.
OH GOD, NO--!

DAMN THEM-- DAMN THEM ALL TO HELL.
THEY THOUGHT THEY COULD BREED THE MONSTERS. CHRIST--
--THE MONSTERS WERE BREEDING US!
WE'VE GOT TO GO BACK.


TO THOSE THINGS? TO SPIT AND POLISH BASTARDS? I'M NOT SURE WHICH IS WORSE--
IT'S OVER, NEWT. WE'RE HELPLESS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'RE HELPLESS.

IT'S NOT.

DESTROYING THE ALIENS HAD BEEN AN ALL CONSUMING PASSION, YET THERE WAS LITTLE SENSE OF *ACHIEVEMENT* AS WE LEFT TO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE BENEDICT.
HICKS WENT THROUGH THE MOTIONS BECAUSE "THE MOTIONS" WERE ALL WE HAD LEFT.


THE "OTHER" WATCHED AND APPROVED, AND IN THE END, REVENGE WAS JUST ANOTHER CHEMICAL *REACTION*--LIKE *ALL* THINGS IN LIFE--
ONE INSTANT, THE HIVE WAS THERE.

THE NEXT INSTANT, IT WAS GONE.

FINALLY, HICKS KNEW HE *HAD* TO GO BACK. THERE SIMPLY WASN'T ANYTHING *ELSE*.

COURSE ENTERED, GRAVITY DRIVE UP--
LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE.

WE WERE *NOTHING* WHEN WE LEFT EARTH. WE'D BEEN SENT TO FIND *SPECIMENS*. WE WERE RETURNING WITH *SALVATION*.

THE WORD SEEMED HOLLOW, *RIDICULOUS*. WHERE WOULD I FIND *MY* SALVATION?

--BUTLER?

DON'T-- PLEASE--

ARE YOU--ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

PLEASE, NEWT--DON'T *LOOK* AT ME--

I--I CAN'T. I NEED TO KNOW.

I NEED TO KNOW IF--IF WHAT WE HAD WAS *REAL*.

WHEN THAT--*THING* TORE INTO ME--I REMEMBER THINKING HOW MUCH I *LOVED* YOU--

--THEN I SAW WHAT WAS *LEFT*--AND SUDDENLY I KNEW--

--GOD WE *ALL* KNEW--

HICKS SAID IT WAS JUST *PROGRAMMING*--PART OF SOME *SOCIALIZATION* PROCESS--YOU BELIEVED YOU WERE HUMAN BECAUSE IT WAS *EASIER*--

BUT THAT DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN US. IT *CAN'T*.

IT— CAN'T--

I--I TOUCHED HIM. HIS SKIN WAS WARM--SOFT.
HE WAS ALIVE.

MAYBE ALL LIFE IS LIKE HICKS' REVENGE-- CHEMICAL-- RANDOM--
--HATE--DEATH--LOVE-- ALL MEANINGLESS OUTSIDE SOME LARGER CONTEXT--

--IT ALWAYS COMES BACK TO OUR ARROGANCE. THE SCIENTISTS WANT TO DRAW A LINE BETWEEN MAN AND HIS MACHINES--
NEWT--
--BUT WHAT DID IT MATTER? BUTLER CARED FOR ME. NOT LIKE HICKS--NOT LIKE EARTH'S DOCTORS--

WHAT MADE THEIR HATE MORE ALIVE THAN THEIR CREATION'S LOVE?

TIME PASSED QUICKLY. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE ACHERON, I FELT A SENSE OF CALM.
EARTH DRIFTED BELOW US LIKE SOME BRIGHT TOY AND AT LONG LAST WE WERE HOME.
WE HAVEN'T GOT MUCH TIME. THE CREATURES HAVE BREACHED THE GALVESTON SECURITY LINE--I THOUGHT ORONA SAID--
ORONA'S DEAD--! HAPPENED WEEKS AGO-- WE FOUND WHAT WAS LEFT OF HIM INSIDE THE MAIN BIO LAB--
SIR--WE'RE PICKING UP TWO SHIPS ON THE DS SCANNER-- ONE'S EMITTING A STANDARD TYPE FOUR BEACON--THE OTHER IS UNIDENTIFIED--
THE TYPE FOUR'S ASKING PERMISSION TO LAND. WE'VE CANNIBALIZED MOST OF THE TRANSLODE COMPUTERS, BUT I MANAGED TO PULL A PRELIMINARY I.D.--
THE BENEDICT--MY GOD-- STEPHEN'S SHIP--
GRANT PERMISSION FOR LANDING. I'LL MEET THEM AT THE PAD PERSONALLY--

WIND AND RAIN BATTERED THE SHIP AS WE SETTLED ON THE LANDING PLATFORM. IT WAS ALMOST AS IF NATURE ITSELF WERE REBELLING AGAINST THE MILITARY'S PLAN.
THE RAIN REMINDED ME OF ACHERON--REMINDED ME OF MY INNOCENCE--
TAKE THE SYNTHETICS TO REHAB--WE'LL DEAL WITH THEM LATER--
--ONE OF THE BIONATIONAL EXECUTIVES TOLD US ABOUT STEPHENS AFTER ALL THE SHIT CAME DOWN--
--YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THOSE BASTARDS ANY--
DAMN IT, LISTEN TO ME-- ORONA TRANSMITTED A MESSAGE ABOUT THE DETONATION JUST BEFORE HE DIED. YOU HAVE TO STOP IT--

--THERE MAY BE ANOTHER WAY--
--WE'VE SUSPECTED THE EXISTENCE OF OTHER SENTIENT BEINGS SINCE THE NOSTROMO MISSION. IT DOESN'T CHANGE THINGS.
THE ALIENS HAVE WON, CORPORAL. BASIC MILITARY TACTICS--WHEN YOU'RE OUTGUNNED, YOU RETREAT--AND LEAVE NOTHING FOR YOUR ENEMY.
JESUS--HAVEN'T YOU HEARD ANYTHING I'VE SAID? THERE'S STILL A CHANCE IF YOU'LL DEAL WITH THE--
TH-THEY DON'T WANT TO STOP IT.
WHAT--?
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE ALIENS OVERRUN US--WE'VE GOT TO DEAL WITH THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION--
ORONA UNDERSTOOD. THE ALIEN ATTACK ISN'T EVIL. IT'S OPPORTUNITY--

"--EARTH'S BEEN ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION FOR DECADES. THERE'S NO *DISCIPLINE*--NO *ORDER*.

"THE ALIENS ONLY *EXACERBATED* THE SITUATION. IT WOULD HAVE COME TO THIS SOONER OR LATER.

"IT'S A CHANCE TO *CLEAN* THE *SLATE*-- A CHANCE TO START AGAIN--

"AFTER A FEW YEARS--WHEN IT'S OVER-- THE SURVIVORS CAN RETURN AND TERRAFORM EARTH INTO SOMETHING *BEAUTIFUL* AGAIN--

"ORONA UNDERSTOOD-- THE ALIENS HAVE GIVEN US A CHANCE TO *REDISCOVER* OURSELVES--

"IT'S A GOOD THING."

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE ACHERON, I *LAUGHED*. I LAUGHED BECAUSE *WORDS* HAD LOST THEIR MEANING-- BECAUSE THAT SON OF A BITCH ORONA HAD BEEN *RIGHT*--

--THE ALIENS *DIDN'T* DESTROY US--

--WE DID

SIR--THERE'S BEEN A BREECH OF THE SOUTHERN PERIMETER OUR SPOTTERS HAVE SEEN *HUNDREDS* OF THE--

LOCK DOWN THE SHIPS AND PREPARE FOR LAUNCH. IT'S *TIME*.

AND WHAT ABOUT *US*--?

YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT. THE TIME FOR MILITARY PROTOCOL AND POLITE *INQUIRIES* ARE LONG PAST--

--YOU'RE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE STILL ON EARTH. *UNNECESSARY*.

--BACK AWAY--
REPORT TO THE PAD
FOR LAUNCH--!
RUN!
RUN!
UNNECESSARY
MY ASS.
JUST LET
IT END. THE
WAY IT SHOULD
HAVE ENDED
ON ACHERON--
FOR BOTH
OF US--
--I'M NOT
GIVING THOSE
ALIEN SHITS THE
PLEASURE AND
NEITHER ARE
YOU--
I SMUGGLED YOU
ABOARD THE BENEDICT--
AND IF I'VE LEARNED ONE
THING ABOUT THE MILITARY
IT'S THIS--
LEVEL 1
THEY
NEVER
LEARN..
WAIT--!
WE DON'T
HAVE TIME FOR
THIS, NEWT--
THIS IS
WHERE THEY TOOK
BUTLER--I--
OH GOD--
WHAT HAVE
THEY
DONE--?
THEY
DESTROYED
THE OTHERS--TOOK
WHAT THEY COULD
SALVAGE--
I--I
DIDN'T THINK
YOU'D COME
BACK.

--HALF THESE SHIPS ARE AUTOMATED CARGO CARRIERS-- NO CREW. IF WE CAN IDENTIFY A SPECIFIC--

--THAT'S IT. DECK FOUR

KEEP FIRING! KEEP FIRING! WE CAN'T LET THEM GET TO THE PAD--

--WE CAN'T LE--

BRAM! BRAM!

I'M STILL NOT SURE WHAT KICKS WAS THINKING AS WE CLIMBED ABOARD THE CARGO SHIP. PERHAPS HE WASN'T *THINKING* AT ALL--JUST *REACTING* AS THE *SOLDIER* IN HIM TOOK OVER--

DAMN IT, HURRY!

AAAGGGG--

--OR MAYBE AFTER ALL THE DEATH AND PAIN, SOMETHING FINALLY *SPARKED* INSIDE HIM SOMETHING *PRECIOUS*.

--WE GOT *LUCKY* MOST OF THESE CARGO JOBS HAVE BEEN RETROFITTED FOR TOTAL AUTO OPERATION. THIS ONE STILL HAS SOME *MANUAL* CONTROLS

--FULLY PRESSURIZED ATMOSPHERE'S NOMINAL--MAKES SENSE--

--SHIP'S REGISTER *SPECIFIES* ORGANIC CARGO HELL--IT'S NOAH'S HAPPY LITTLE ARK.

HIS WILL TO *LIVE*.

--THE ALIENS HAVE ENTERED THE FACILITY-- PREPARE THE SHIPS FOR LAUNCH ON MY COMMAND--
--SIR-- SOME OF THE MEN ARE STILL ON DECK, MAKING FINAL--
--I'M PROUD OF EVERY ONE OF THEM. NOW PREPARE FOR LAUNCH OR I'LL HAVE YOU SHOT.
I COULD HEAR GUNFIRE AND SCREAMS AS THE ALIENS ADVANCED ON OUR SHIP. THE SOUNDS OF A PLANET DYING.
THE AUTOMATIC LAUNCH SEQUENCERS LOCKED AND THE WHINE OF THE SHIP'S ENGINES DROWNED OUT THE HORROR BELOW.

WE WERE LEAVING EARTH TO THE ALIENS AND ORONA'S 'OPPORTUNITY'--
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE CRIED-- FELT SOMETHING FOR THOSE WE LEFT BEHIND--BUT I'D RUN OUT OF TEARS LONG AGO--
--AND THEN IT SPOKE TO ME--

--SOMETHING EXPLODED--BRIGHT, LIKE A MILLION SUNS--
I--
CAN--
SEE--
NEWT-- WHAT'S WRONG--?
IT--IT HAD CHANGED SINCE THE HOMEWORLD IT TOOK ME A MOMENT TO FULLY COMPREHEND--
AGGH--
IT UNDERSTOOD ABOUT ORONA-- IT KNEW HIS TWISTED PLAN--
WE THOUGHT IT SHARED OUR THIRST FOR VENGEANCE. WE LED IT TO EARTH IN THE MISTAKEN BELIEF IT MIGHT WANT TO "HELP" US.
HOW COULD WE HAVE BEEN SO BLIND? IT SHARED SO MANY OF OUR MERCURIAL HUMAN EMOTIONS. HATE. ANGER.
THE DESIRE TO CONQUER.
IT NO LONGER CARED ABOUT THE ALIENS. INTEREST HAD SHIFTED. THE SOLDIERS ASSUMED THEY WOULD RETURN ONE DAY AND TERRAFORM EARTH FOR THEMSELVES--
IT WOULD WATCH. IT WOULD BE WAITING FOR THEM.
IT JUST WANTED ME TO KNOW.

THE CARGO VESSEL'S NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTERS WERE LOCKED ONTO ■ DEEP SPACE TRAJECTORY. THE GRAVITY DRIVE PULSED LIKE A LIVING THING, PROPELLING US ACROSS BILLIONS OF MILES OF SPACE.
HICKS FINALLY HAD HIS REVENGE, BUT HE FOUND NO *SATISFACTION* IN IT.
WHEN IT BEGAN, HE BLAMED HIS MISERY ON THE *ALIENS*. NOW ALL HE COULD BLAME WAS *HIMSELF*.
I WAS STANDING AT ONE OF THE VIEWPORTS, STARING INTO SPACE. THE LIGHT FROM THE STARS STRETCHED AROUND THE SHIP LIKE GLOWING WHITE NEON--
--BUT THIS TIME IT WAS *DIFFERENT*.
I WASN'T *ALONE* ANYMORE-- AND MAYBE, FINALLY, THAT WAS ALL THAT *MATTERED*.